

TRANSFORMATION

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How to Find a Safe Port in the Turnover Tsunami: Spotlight on Career Development

While the “turnover tsunami” has not quite manifested, many working people are actively re-evaluating their current jobs and seriously considering changes.



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Stay informed with the latest on workforce and leadership trends, thought-provoking insights and expert analysis that help companies create opportunity and individuals succeed.



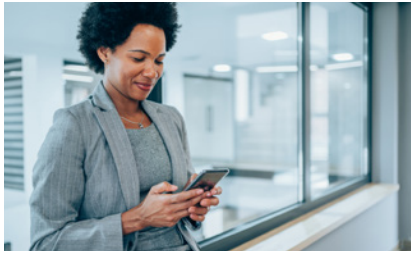
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How to Find a Safe Port in the Turnover Tsunami: Spotlight on Career Development

Izabella Khazagerova, SVP and Global Head of Talent Mobility and Future of Work Solutions, LHH

It's not a turnover tsunami. Not yet.

All over the world, economists are sounding the alarm about a tidal wave of voluntary separations involving workers looking for jobs that offer new challenges, more flexibility or more overall satisfaction. The data behind these claims helped fuel the creation of the term “turnover tsunami” and “the great resignation.”

Some of the most compelling data came from the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), which reported this summer that it had recorded four million “quits” in April 2021, the highest monthly tally of voluntary separations since the bureau first established that metric in 2000. Another 1.8 million Americans left work because of layoffs, discharges, death and disabilities.

At the same time, only 34% of non-managers are satisfied with their career prospects. And almost half – 41 percent – are contemplating finding jobs with more flexible options.

However, is this proof that a storm of resignations has hit every company and every sector of the economy?

In *Resetting Normal: Defining a New Era of Work*, The Adecco Group (TAG) has

attempted to drill down much deeper into the voluntary separation phenomenon to find out whether it has arrived, or whether it is building like dark storm clouds on the workforce management horizon.

The survey, conducted in early 2021, probed 14,800 white collar workers between the ages of 18 and 60, spread across 25 countries. The respondents all had desk-based jobs, worked at least 20 hours a week and were required to work remotely during the pandemic.

The TAG survey results show very clearly that while the turnover tsunami has not quite manifested, many working people are actively reassessing their current jobs and – in some cases – seriously considering changes to position themselves for future career satisfaction.

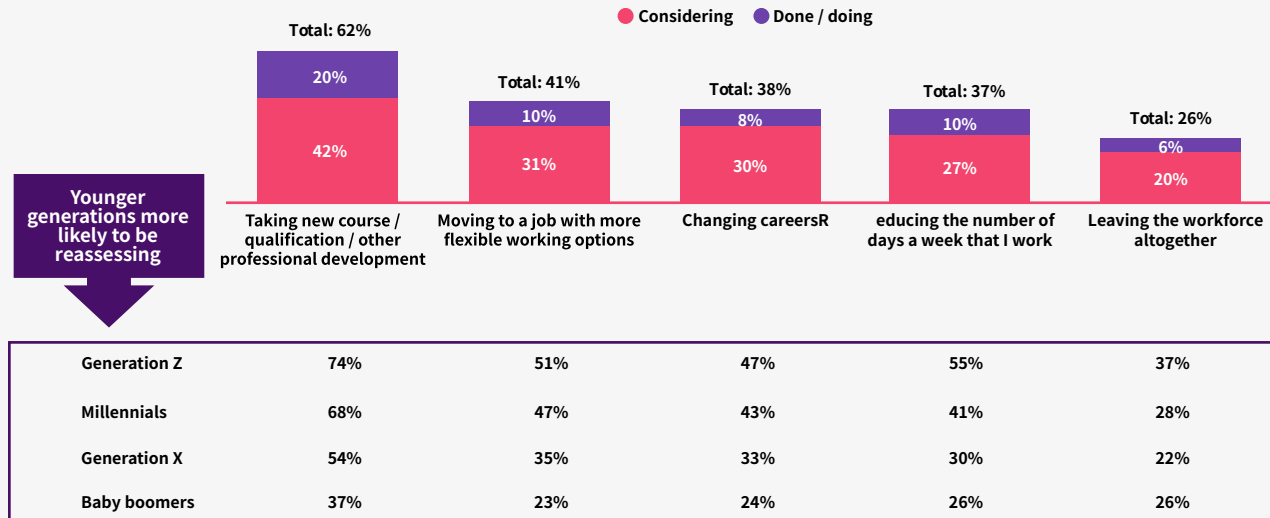
The pent-up demand for something different and better

Through the first year of the pandemic, it was a lot more difficult to consider changing jobs or careers. However, in the later stages of the pandemic, it seems that we are either launching ourselves into change or preparing ourselves for a change in the very near future.

“The survey shows that many working people are looking for better conditions at their current jobs and if they don’t get it, they will go somewhere else.”

Many people are reassessing their working life in a variety of ways with almost 2 in 5 changing or considering new careers

% Who say they have done, are doing or are considering the following (NET Already done / doing / considering)



Q33. Have you done or considered doing any of the following in response to the changes in working life over the last 12 months? (NET: Already done / doing / considering) Base: All respondents (14,900), Generation Z (380), Millennials (6,909), Generation X (6,159), Baby boomers (1,353)

The survey found that 20 percent of all respondents had engaged in learning or professional development, and another 42 percent were strongly considering activities designed to broaden their knowledge or qualifications.

Although learning in and of itself is not a precursor to a possible job move, there is a parallel and growing appetite to change jobs and careers that underlies the survey results.

For example, only 10 percent of respondents or less said they had moved jobs to get a more flexible working situation, changed careers, or reduced the number of days they work each week. Only six percent of respondents said they had left the workforce altogether.

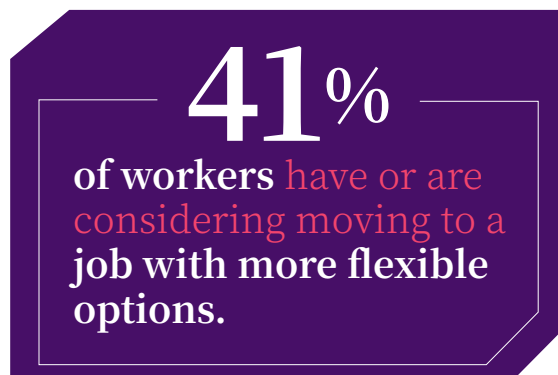
However, roughly three in 10 respondents said they were planning to change jobs to gain more flexibility, change careers altogether or find opportunities to reduce their work week. Results like these should serve as a wake-up call for business leaders: the turnover tsunami has not hit most companies yet; but it's coming.

Very rarely do employers get a chance to see a problem coming and do something about it before it arrives. Far too often, we're reacting to talent trends after they start to impact our ability to recruit and retain top talent. The survey shows that many working people are looking for better conditions at their current jobs and if they don't get it, they will go somewhere else.

The younger the worker, the bigger the appetite for learning and career mobility

The appetite for career development, or a possible change in job or career, was most pronounced among Gen Z respondents (74 percent have or considered learning) and Millennials (68 percent), less so among Gen X (54 percent). Only slightly more than one-third of Boomer respondents were considering a learning opportunity.

The same trend held in the category of moving jobs or changing careers. Gen Z (51 percent are moving or planning a move) were the most mobile, followed by Millennials (47 percent), Gen X (35 percent) and Boomers (24 percent).



Why are so many people thinking about making a change?

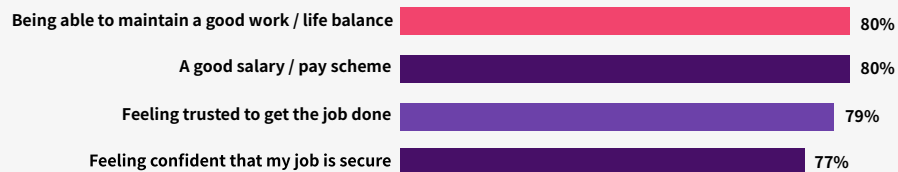
What exactly is behind all this pent-up appetite for change? The pandemic, and the changes it forced on our working lives, has definitely piqued our interest in new jobs and careers.

Being forced to work from home, away from the direct supervision of managers, and worry about job security seem to have combined to reboot career priorities. For example, eight in 10 survey respondents ranked maintaining a good work-life balance, salary and “feeling trusted to get the job done” as their top career priorities going forward.

Security, agency, culture, wellbeing and development are most important to workers going forward

% Who believe these factors will be important to their working life after the pandemic (NET Important) [Top 10]

Pay, work / life balance, trust and job security remain the top fundamental needs of workers



Flexibility, a clear sense of purpose, recognition and the chance to learn and develop are also important



Trust & agency Culture & engagement Wellbeing Career & security

Q20. How important will the following be to your life after the pandemic? (NET Important) Base: All respondents (14,800)

These were closely followed by job security (77 percent), flexible working arrangements (76 percent), having a job with a clear sense of purpose (75 percent), maintaining a good relationship with my manager (74 percent), physical health and fitness (73 percent), praise and recognition (72 percent) and career development opportunities (71 percent).

Taken together, the underlying reasons why people are interested in changing jobs or careers is closely tied to the pandemic working experience. So many of us were sent home to work and have had to balance work and family in the home office. It affected our mental and physical health, and now we're hungry to find new career opportunities that give us the flexibility and support for a happier and healthier working life.

Conclusion

The writing is clearly on the wall. Your best people have been through a very tough time and they are starting to reprioritize their career goals and values. Employers that acknowledge this trend and take steps to engage with employees on career and skill development, may find that they occupy a safe port when the turnover tsunami hits.





Bridging the Growing Chasm Between Leaders and Their People: Spotlight on Back to Work

Jessica Conser, Ph.D., SVP, Product and Solutions, LHH

Business leaders have never faced a challenge like this before.

Even as uncertainty continues to define our battle with COVID-19, many business organizations are devising back-to-work strategies. For some, it will mean a full return to in-person, in-office work; for others, a hybrid approach split between home and formal office. A few companies have even decided that remote work – widely embraced as a pandemic mitigation strategy – will serve as the new normal.

Whatever the strategy, business leaders must be very deliberate in planning. Many of the people who were forced out of familiar office environments to work from

home are severely stressed, some with the experience of working from home, others about the prospects of returning to the office. A poorly devised and badly implemented back-to-work strategy could have a devastating effect on people.

Where should employers start when devising their back-to-work plans, and what issues should be taken into consideration?

Unfortunately, it appears leaders and employees are reading off different song sheets when it comes to devising back-to-work strategies. That was certainly the findings in *Resetting Normal: Defining a New Era of Work*, a ground-breaking survey conducted by The Adecco Group.

“Eighty percent of respondents across all organizational levels – senior leaders, frontline managers, and non-managers – want to maintain some of the flexibility they won during the pandemic.”

In early 2021, an online survey reached 14,800 white collar workers between the ages of 18 and 60, spread across 25 countries. The respondents all had desk-based jobs, worked at least 20 hours a week and were required to work remotely during the pandemic.

Our findings reveal both the great seismic shift that has been triggered by the pandemic and the move to remote work, and the failure of many organizations to meet the revised expectations of their employees.

A fierce and growing appetite for flexibility at work

One of the inevitable consequences of remote work was the enhanced control over the workday. Gone were the days of punching a clock; in the pandemic era, people quickly ditched commutes and embraced more flexible schedules that allowed them to start, finish and stagger

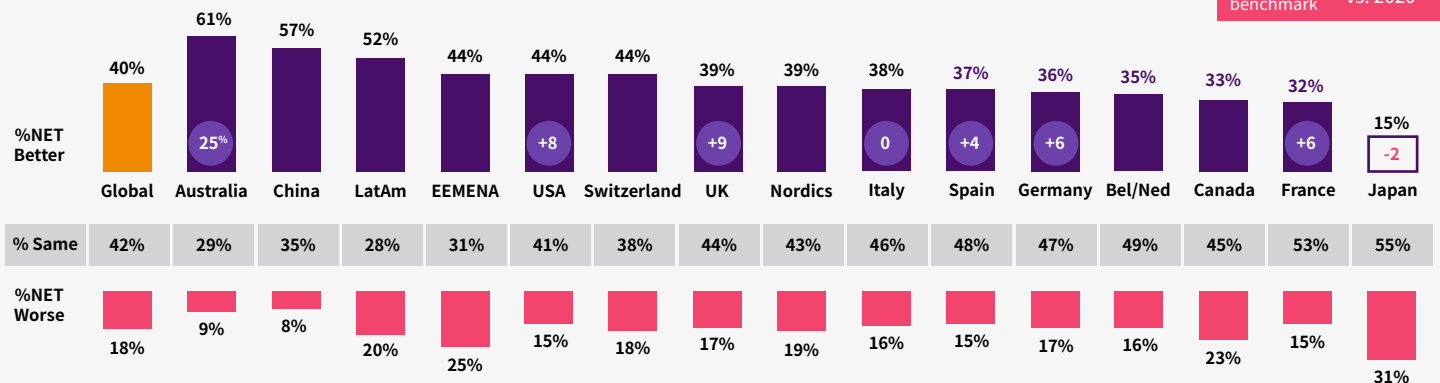
work hours like never before. And for the most part, employees like the experience and believe it is better overall for their productivity.

The survey found an impressive 80 percent of respondents across all organizational levels – senior leaders, frontline managers, and non-managers – want to maintain some of the flexibility they won during the pandemic. And 70 percent of respondents want their work to be judged less on hours being worked, and more on the outcomes of their work.

Overall, respondents supported the idea that remote work improved productivity: 40 percent said their output improved and another 42 percent said it remained about the same. Only 18 percent said productivity suffered from remote work.

Productivity has survived the shift to hybrid work

% Who say their productivity has got worse / stayed the same / got better during the last 12 months



* Caution: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding issues

Q8. Thinking about the following aspects of your own working life, which do you feel have got better during the last 12 months, and which have stayed the same or got worse? (NET Better, NET Worse) Base: All respondents (14,900), Australia (1,000), France (1,000), Germany (1,000), Italy (1,000), Japan (1,000), Spain (1,000), UK (1,000), USA (1,000), Canada (1,000), China (1,000), Switzerland (900), Belgium / Netherlands (1,000), EEMENA (1,000), LatAm (1,000), Nordics (1,000)

Generational variations were also present. The appetite for flexibility and achieving work-life balance is most pronounced among Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials, and less important for those employees in Gen Z. This is an important consideration given that there are up to five generations working within the same organization. Leaders need to recognize that these differences in working preferences may exist across their teams.

Failure to live up to the ideal of work-life balance

It appears that expressing support for greater flexibility is not necessarily translating into change.

A more flexible working schedule is an essential component in work-life balance, something that was a growing priority for top talent before the pandemic. Many working people achieved greater balance when remote work was thrust upon them.

Still, there is a sense among survey respondents that employers are not necessarily embracing that flexibility and balance.

Seven in 10 senior leaders believe they have met or exceeded expectations on supporting work-life balance. However, only 54 percent of frontline managers believe expectations have been met or exceeded, and that drops to 42 percent for non-managers.

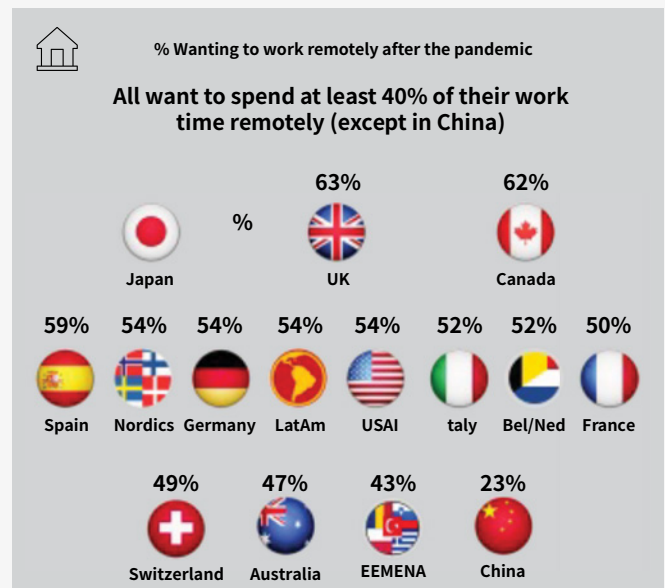
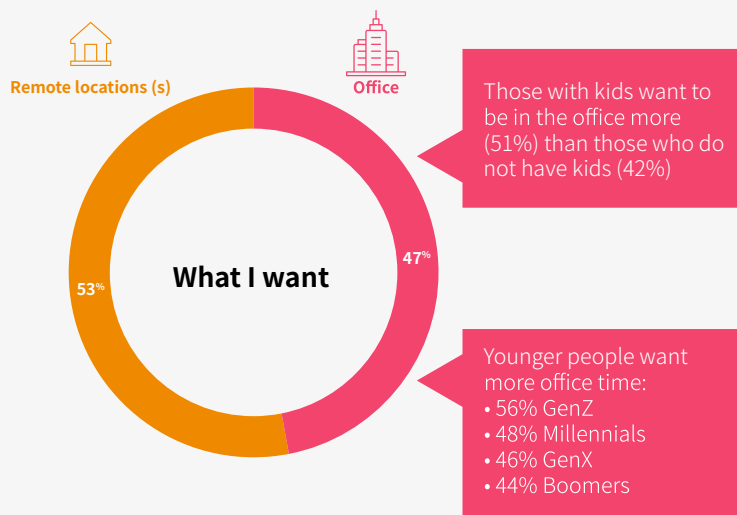
The future of work is not an either (at home) or (at the office) scenario

Greater flexibility will increasingly mean being able to split time between the traditional and home offices, at the discretion of employees.

More than half of all respondents (53%) want a hybrid working arrangement that allows them to pick and choose days to be at home or in the office. Interestingly, respondents with children wanted to spend more time in the office, and younger generations want more time in a traditional office.

The next normal continues to be universally hybrid: Over half of workers want to work remotely

%Who want to spend their working week in the following locations after the pandemic



Q17. If you could choose for yourself, what proportion of your time would you want to spend in the following locations in an average week after the pandemic? (NET From the office, NET Remotely)
Base: All respondents (14,800), Have children at home (8,148), Do not have children (5,595), Generation Z (380), Millennials (6,908), Generation X (6,159), Baby boomers (1,353)

However, perhaps as an expression of the inability to meet expectations on work-life balance, respondents were also somewhat skeptical that the kind of hybrid working arrangements they want will come to fruition. While a slim majority want to split time between home and office, 61 percent of respondents expect their employers to make them spend more time overall in the office.

Whatever the scenario, anxiety is running high

Uncertainty about the trajectory of the pandemic and its variants is causing a lot of organizations to hedge their bets on a return-to-work plan. Those delays – and a lack of detail about how much time people are going to be asked to spend in the office – are starting to take a toll on employees.

Half of all respondents are anxious about returning to work. And there is a pronounced difference on this issue between men and women. Nearly half of all women, and just over a third of all men, are anxious about spending any time back in the office. However, both men and women are in synch on one issue: less than half of all respondents, regardless of gender, want to return to the office.

Conclusion

The disconnect between senior leaders and the people they lead is related to many issues surrounding return-to-work planning. These issues are significant and potentially destructive. People have dealt with a lot of change in the last 18 months and a poor effort in designing return-to-work plans or imposing a solution that runs against the

grain of employee opinion, could handicap human capital strategy for years to come.

The key will be to establish a set of principles – guardrails if you like – that can help inform back-to-work planning and execution. There are so many different issues to consider when plotting a return to the office, either full-time or adopting a hybrid approach.

Who should come back first? How many days do you need people in the office to be effective, if at all? Will those employees who are permitted to continue working in full remote mode require some sort of new or innovative supervision? Should my organization maintain a head office, or start devolving the bricks-and-mortar structure in favor of something more dispersed?

Overall, flexibility is the key to this endeavor, particularly over the next six to nine months as the world watches closely to see if global vaccine initiatives have their desired effects. Flexibility is also the order of the day

when designing back-to-work plans for employees working in different regions or countries; as our survey showed, attitudes about returning to the office and the performance of leaders varies widely from country to country. Those data points scream out for a strategy that considers local culture.

Most importantly, do not assume that the plan you put in place now is the end of this process. There must be constant evaluation and reassessment to ensure that you are getting the desired outcomes. If we've learned anything in the last 18 months, it is that conditions change on an almost weekly basis. Preparing now means you can weather unanticipated changes without disrupting operations.

Flexibility. Preparation. Clarity. These are not only the features an effective back-to-work strategy, but they are also the hallmarks of a future-proofed human capital strategy that can sustain you for years beyond the pandemic.



Five Fundamental Strategies to Help Sports Organizations Promote Life-long Employability for Athletes

Mayi Cruz Blanco, Global Head of LHH Sports Solutions and Athlete Programmes

Ask any elite athlete and they will tell you that to succeed, they must be totally focused on training and competition. So much so that it's sometimes difficult to find the time to think about a future after sport.

However, if we know anything about the highest level of sports, it is that retirement comes for every athlete, at some point. That puts the onus on athletes and their sports organizations to put as much effort into building an effective transition program as they do in preparing them for competition.

But where to start? Sports organizations are experts in their chosen fields, but they often lack the expertise and skills to provide career transition support to athletes.

Over the years, LHH and its parent company, the Adecco Group, have developed a comprehensive checklist of best practices for sports organizations. Here are five fundamental strategies to help sports organizations promote life-long employability for athletes.

1/ Make athlete career transition planning a formal policy and program

Far too many sports organizations have deliberately excluded all discussion of post-competition career planning out of a fear it would distract athletes from job one: training and competing.

However, a few truly progressive sports organizations have started to realize that post-competition career planning should be a part of their core programming. And that athletes should be exposed to that programming from the start of their competitive careers and not just on the eve of retirement.

Some, like the Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels (FIFPRO), a global organization that advocates for better treatment of 65,000 professional soccer players, provides advice

to football organizations on how to promote education and post-competition career planning into their day-to-day operations.

In its [2021 Shaping Our Future Report](#), FIFPRO notes that football is a profession with notoriously little job security. Short-term contracts, intense competition for first-team spots all add up to significant uncertainty. Football players need to be encouraged to start planning for their post-competition careers as soon as possible.

“The challenge lies in changing the perception that it is not possible to pursue both a football career and other education or vocational training,” the report stated. “The benefits of making education and training accessible to professional players can be found on and off the pitch.”

2/ Prepare athletes with a journey map

Athletes are, by their very natures, familiar with rigorous schedules and advance planning for everything from training regimens to nutrition. Sports organizations can make use of these natural tendencies by working with athletes to build a Journey Map.

This map can help athletes take stock of their current level of career skills and education and plot a path towards a specific post-competition career whether that is transitioning towards a career in an entirely different industry, or finding sustainable opportunities within their sport.

The [Deutscher Fußball-Bund](#) (German Football Federation) shows how governing bodies can help players find work in their sports after competition with journey mapping for those who want to pursue a career as a top-level coach. For more than 70 years, the DFB has helped thousands of professional players acquire their Football Coaching License, which allows them to coach at any level of professional football in Germany.

“Coaches and athletes know that when you have a specific challenge – physical therapy, nutrition, psychology – it pays to bring in an expert partner. The same dynamic holds true for athlete transition.”



3/ Educate both athletes and their entourages about the importance of career planning

To make a successful transition from sports to a post-competition career, many athletes are encouraged to pursue a “dual career” where education and non-sport skills development accompanies training and competition. However, in order to maintain this dual track, athletes need support and encouragement from everyone in their entourage.

Today’s athletes are typically surrounded by a broad array of people to support them in their sporting endeavors: coaches, nutritionists, sports medicine experts and even family combine to form an essential support network.

The strength of these relationships can also be an impediment to post-career planning. Recent [studies](#) indicate the athlete entourage ultimately plays a critical role in convincing athletes to pursue a dual career.

“However, for the athletes to be able to maintain a dual career they needed to have opportunities to complete their educational and their training requirements,” stated a joint study from Swansea University, the Welsh Institute of Science and Loughborough University. “If athletes did not have access to these opportunities a dual career was impossible. Further, if the support network in either domain was not supportive of the other it was unlikely that athletes would have been able to succeed.”

4/ Make sure that post-competition wellness is part of any transition program

If this past summer Olympic Games has shown us anything, it’s that athlete mental well-being is just as important as physical well-being. And nobody provided a more poignant example of that than U.S. gymnast Simone Biles.

Arguably the greatest female gymnast of her generation, Biles [withdrew](#) from many of her best events in Tokyo because of concerns about her mental health. Her decision, in the heat of competition, was controversial; but it also triggered an important debate about the need to ensure that mental health – both during competition and post-competitive careers – is built into the athlete journey.

Experts in athlete mental health have been [sounding the alarm](#) for years now, advocating a formal wellness framework as part of competitive and post-competitive training and preparation. Academic [studies](#) have suggested that up to one in five retiring elite athletes suffer from a mental health crisis upon leaving their sports.

Thankfully, some sports organizations are taking up the challenge. [Game Plan](#), a joint program between the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee and Sport Canada, provides mental health support to athletes during and after their careers. And the governing organizations that oversee Australia’s Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes were [recently told](#) that they must offer mental health programming and submit to regular Wellbeing Health Checks in order to secure government funding.

5/ Get expert help to design your athlete career program

Coaches and athletes know that when you have a specific challenge – physical therapy, nutrition, psychology – it pays to bring in an expert partner. The same dynamic holds true for athlete transition.

The career transition industry has evolved from mostly passive support to active help to not only prepare for a post-competition career but also to make valuable connections with employers that have job openings with very specific skill needs. Athletes have a unique collection of inherent qualities and skills that make them valuable within the skilled labor market. Sometimes, all they need is someone to help them connect with hiring managers.

It’s important to remember that career transition is a specialized discipline that requires expert insight and skills. Just as athletes seek expert advice to help them compete at the highest level, sports organizations must seek out career transition experts to help them support athletes in a post-competition world.

[Research by the Adecco Group and LHH](#) has clearly established that athletes have a wide range of core attributes and transferrable skills that are in high demand by today’s employers. That means when athletes transition to a post-competition career, they do not need to abandon their mindset and identity. In fact, the core attributes that make athletes successful in sports can also help them to be successful in a broad range of other careers.

Sports organizations have an opportunity to help their athletes prepare for life beyond sport. By partnering with career transition partners, they can help athletes harness the unique value they offer to organizations, and support them in their efforts to achieve a rewarding post-competition career.





Five Key Leadership Behaviors for a New Kind of Leader

Jessica Conser, Ph.D., SVP, Product and Solutions, LHH

The relationship between leaders and the people they lead is in desperate need of a reboot.

According to a ground-breaking global research survey conducted by The Adecco Group, senior business leaders are profoundly disconnected from their employees on most major workplace issues, including career development, mental health and wellness and plans for a full or partial return to the office. The gap is as wide as it is troubling.

The results certainly suggest leaders need to move quickly to repair these relationships and, at the same time, re-evaluate their skills and look for new and updated approaches to leading people.

However, these are complex relationships and fixing them will take a deliberate and focused effort on the part of leaders.

Leaders and their organizations need to be deliberate and purposeful in changing leadership skills and mindsets, adopting best practices to bring leaders closer to their employees.

Where to start? At LHH, we've always focused on helping leaders develop different approaches, embrace transformational competencies and exhibit new behaviors that allow them to be more empathetic, compassionate and resilient.

1. Ask, don't always tell. One of the most effective things a leader can do to repair relationships and bridge disconnects is to adopt a coaching mindset. Professional coaches do not preach solutions or prescribe specific measures. The emphasis in this relationship is on asking the right questions and listening carefully to the answers. Even if those answers reveal some unflattering aspects of the

leader-employee relationship. This is a technique that encourages dialogue, draws out a full picture of how the employee sees the leader and the organization, and eventually leads to other, more meaningful conversations. It is, in almost every way, the essential foundation for the leader-employee relationship.

2. Create true partnerships. Once the lines of communication have been opened through the adoption of a coaching mindset, you're ready to create mutually beneficial relationships. These relationships are the vehicles through which leaders can identify synergies and learning opportunities across their teams. When the team suffers a setback, good leaders will emphasize the idea failing is actually a "First Attempt in Learning." In a true partnership, where everyone shares successes and failures, you need a relationship where you can bypass recrimination and proceed directly to solutions – when we do this the next time, how will we do things differently? A true partnership involves a constant, relentless culture of learning that promotes innovation, agility and – ultimately – better outcomes.

3. Emphasize empathy and self-awareness in your leadership culture. It's no secret that the best leaders have a high degree of emotional intelligence (EQ). The leadership development industry has been trying for years to promote the values and benefits of EQ. And while there has been some success, far too many leaders are too focused on themselves, and lack the basic empathy to inspire the people they lead. Successful leaders know their own limitations, are honest about them with the people they lead, and seek in-the-moment feedback from their teams to keep everyone on the same emotional plain. EQ will come naturally to some leaders. For most of the rest of us, it is hard work that requires organizational support and investment. It's only by putting in the time and effort to be a better, more emotionally intelligent and cognizant person, that we can go on to be better leaders.

4. Ask better questions. Leaders need to know that what they ask their employees, and how they ask, has a huge impact on engagement and workplace wellness. There's a big difference between "why

didn't you get that done?" and "Can we figure out how we all missed that deadline?" Both questions are designed to address an important business issue; only the latter question will get you to the heart of exactly what happened. If you ask questions that are designed to provoke defensiveness or even contempt, then you will never figure out where your team came up short. Remember, as we noted above, you're in a partnership with your team, and that means asking employees to tell you how they are doing, how are they coping with things like the pandemic, and how they are getting along with co-workers. Use your questions to show them that you share responsibility for setbacks, and are more interested in solutions than blame.

5. Make time for meaningful career conversations.

One of the biggest jobs for any leader is helping employees grow and develop their careers. And make no mistake about it – your employees want you to be interested in their careers. Surveys of working people all over the world show they really want to work in a company that is interested in helping them do bigger, better things in their careers. This really requires leaders to set aside time to have focused, meaningful conversations about how their current work is going, and the kind of work they may want to do in the future. Ask questions around what activities they find motivating in their current role. When you demonstrate an interest, employees may be more willing to take on a stretch assignment, to seek opportunities to learn new skills to fill a future role. Failure to have these meaningful conversations can only end one way: with top talent leaving to join an organization that cares about their career journey.

None of the points above are, on their own, a magic bullet to bridge the broad and widening gulf that exists between leaders and the people they lead. Together, however, they can be a potent and inspiring strategy that can lead to a more engaged and productive workforce.





5 Steps to Building a Culture that Supports Internal Talent Development and Mobility

Transformation Insights

What we have here is a failure to communicate.

All over the world, working people are craving support to learn, grow and future-proof their careers. They understand that the very nature of work is changing, and if they are to remain relevant, they will need to acquire new skills to fill the jobs of the future.

And for the most part, employers understand this pressing need for career and skills development. But somehow, even though we all want the same

things, employers, and the people they employ just can't seem to start the career development conversation.

That paradox is laid bare in new data collected for *Resetting Normal: Defining a New Era of Work*, a ground-breaking global survey from The Adecco Group. In early 2021, an online survey reached 14,800 white collar workers between the ages of 18 and 60, spread across 25 countries. The respondents all had desk-based jobs, worked at least 20 hours a week and were required to work remotely during the pandemic.

“Only 22 percent of managers and 31 percent of senior leaders are getting upskilling opportunities.”

The survey found keen interest in career and skills development among senior leaders, frontline managers, and non-managers. However, what was also patently clear was that there were very few focused conversations going on between these constituencies to jump start the career development journey.

The survey found that while 68 percent of all respondents – leaders, frontline managers, and non-managers – believe that upskilling is important, 42 percent are concerned about not having skills that are relevant to the future of work. That's largely because people are not getting access to skills and career development opportunities.

Only 22 percent of managers and 31 percent of senior leaders are getting upskilling opportunities. That might explain why only 31 percent of non-managers believe that their leaders are willing to give them time and resources for upskilling or reskilling.

That last data point certainly suggests while all respondent groups support the concept of skills and career development, there is no overarching culture of learning and development at play, and no internal mechanisms to allow people to seek internal re-/skilling opportunities.

How can organizations create that culture and build those mechanisms? Take these five steps to building a culture that supports internal talent development and mobility:

1. A culture of life-long learning and development starts with senior leaders. It is impossible to satisfy the cravings of your employees for career and skills development unless senior leaders are enunciating their support and backing up those words with resources. And they must communicate clearly and directly with their direct reports and frontline managers to let them know that career and skills development are essential for long-term success.

2. Formalize a system of internal mobility to create the opportunities that will inspire people to re-/upskill. One of the main reasons employees do not seek re-/upskilling is that they do not think there are any opportunities for internal mobility. Sometimes, this is a result of managers hoarding talent and discouraging people from seeking other jobs within the same organization. In other instances, hiring managers may prefer to hire externally rather than go through the trouble of identifying and developing internal talent for new roles. Senior leaders must create an internal talent mobility mechanism that allows people to step forward to seek new opportunities and engage in learning that may go with those new roles.

3. Active career conversations need to be part of ongoing communication between employees and frontline managers. The survey showed that far too many non-managers are discouraged from seeking career and skills development because they think their managers do not want to spare them the time to engage in re-/upskilling. This needs to change. Managers should schedule regular career conversations with their teams, identify employees ready to learn and grow, and help plot a path to new opportunities.

4. Build a career lattice for your people, not a career ladder. A feature of any functional internal talent mobility mechanism is a lattice structure for career development. Many organizations who are leading their industries in internal talent mobility encourage employees to seek all kinds of opportunities – from lateral moves to foreign assignments and special projects – that do not necessarily mean a move up the traditional career ladder. Non-linear career development promotes better alignment between talent and role, which ultimately taps into an individual's potential. That is a win-win for organization and employee.

5. Make sure your employees know they share the responsibility for career and skills development. Although organizational support is important, the individual bears much of the responsibility for moving their careers forward. Organizations can open doors to re-/upskilling opportunities, and conduct regular career conversations, but it's still up to the individual to drive those conversations and voice career aspirations. No one can be dragged kicking and screaming into learning opportunities; employees need to be equal partners in the career and skill development journey.

Creating a culture and mechanisms that allow internal mobility to flourish can create benefits for both individual and organization. For the individual, it's the opportunity to learn, grow and achieve true career satisfaction. For the organization, it's the opportunity to get the right people into the right jobs and empower them to achieve their full potential.





The Athlete Journey: Planning for Life After Sport and Finding Purpose Again

Mayi Cruz Blanco, Global Head of LHH Sports Solutions and Athlete Programmes

By his own admission, Ben Gollings was shaken to the core.

It was 2011 and Gollings, a standout for England's national rugby sevens – a form of rugby that features two, seven-a-side teams playing seven-minute halves – was completely focused on competing in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro where his sport was destined to make its first appearance.

Even though he was 32, he had good reason to believe England still wanted him. Gollings was a legend in his sport, the career leader in points in the World Rugby Sevens Series and holder of several other individual records accumulated over an impressive 70 tournaments.

However, an unassuming trip out to the carpark of the team's training facility spelled the end of his international career.

"We had just finished a successful season and I was in negotiations for a new contract," Gollings said. "Sevens was going to be an Olympic event and I really wanted to play there. And then, I had a two-minute conversation with a team official in the carpark, and it was all over. They told me they weren't going to re-sign me. That was it, that's the end, there's no place for you on this team."

Gollings had always known there would be an end to his rugby career. It's a demanding, full-contact sport and it does take a toll on the players. Still, it was hard at first to wrap his mind around what had happened.

"Promising athletes as young as 16 years old must realize, one day all this will be over, and they must be ready to sacrifice even more for a successful transition for life after sport. Even winning a gold medal in the Olympic Games isn't enough to guarantee you a job."

Pedro Yang,
Fan Integration Manager,
LEGO Group

“I’ve always known that you’re never fully in control of your fate as an athlete in a team-sport environment. Still, it was a bitter pill to swallow after everything I gave to the team. It did affect me for quite a while afterwards, a lot more than I thought it was going to.”

Every year, athletes across the world in sports of all kinds face similar challenges when their athletic careers start to wind down. High-functioning and determined, athletes spend so much time training and competing that it’s easy to lose sight of the need to plan for life after sports.

For Gollings, that stress came fully into view after he left international rugby behind. Although he had the credentials to serve as a top-flight coach, he also longed for a career in business that would allow him to grow and experience new professional challenges.

“When you’re in your sport, you have clarity about your life,” he said. “When it stopped, and I didn’t focus on that anymore, I sort of meandered.”

That meandering took him to coaching positions all over the world: the United States, Sri Lanka and – eventually – Australia. Fortunately, along the way, he was able to connect with some friends in the U.K. who were developing new software to help monitor and manage athletes with concussions. It allowed him to get in on the ground floor of an exciting new company, broaden his career prospects as well as develop his own coaching business.

Still, Gollings cannot help but wonder if he would have spent less time “meandering” if he had specific transition support to help him find stability in the immediate aftermath of his sudden retirement. In large part, that’s why in addition to his new business venture, he’s also hoping to provide support to other athletes who may be going through the same challenges he did.

“Some sort of transition program would have been invaluable,” he said from Australia. “I had a lot of friends and family to support me but from a business perspective, I didn’t have that network and I have a lot of friends and former teammates who have really struggled with that transitional journey.”

Struggle is a word many transitioning athletes use. Pedro Yang tells people that he successfully navigated into his dream job “scanning job ads to find something that fit my profile best. But it’s a challenge. After a sports career, professional athletes are suddenly competing against people who have a lot more time to prepare and develop for their careers.”

After representing Guatemala in the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Yang focused his badminton career on competitions at the Pan American level. Retirement would eventually come following the 2011 Pan Am Games in Guadalajara, Mexico. He had competed at the highest levels of his sport for a remarkable 13 years.



During that time, Yang said he tried to devote some time to planning for a post-competition career. He completed an undergraduate degree in Marketing and a BA (hons) in Business Administration, but it was still hard to build a resume with specific job experience while devoting the time necessary to keep his badminton skills sharp.

“After I retired, I went primarily into coaching like a lot of athletes,” Yang said. “But as well, I had started to take steps to build my skills and professional experiences to ensure I had opportunities other than on the playing field.”

This included eight years on the board of the International Olympic Committee’s Athlete’s Commission and as a facilitator for Athlete Career Programme, a partnership with the Adecco Group, one of the world’s leading human resources providers. During that time, he was focused on the welfare of Olympians and helping athletes across Latin America and other regions prepare for a successful transition for life after competition.

Eventually Yang added enough to his resume that he was able to secure a job in the LEGO Group as International Competition Manager for the world’s biggest Robotics Competition. Eventually, he would move on to become a Fan Integration Manager within the LEGO Group.

“I’ve been blessed to be where I am today, but if I had to do it all over again, I would definitely have started earlier,” Yang said. “As early as possible is the way to go for athletes. Promising athletes as young as 16 years old must realize, one day all this will be over, and they must be ready to sacrifice even more for a successful transition for life after sport. Even winning a gold medal in the Olympic Games isn’t enough to guarantee you a job.”

The reluctance of athletes to start planning a post-sport career earlier has always frustrated Arianna Criscione, an accomplished professional women’s soccer player who played internationally for Italy and for several professional teams across Europe. She retired in June 2021 after a two-year stint with Paris Saint-Germain, one of the most prestigious women’s football clubs in the world.

There was a very good chance that Criscione could have been in retirement two years earlier, if not for a chance upgrade on a flight back to Paris from Budapest, Hungary that put her in a seat beside Bruno Cheyrou, then director of the PSG women’s program.



Criscione said the two discussed a wide range of football issues, including her deep and growing interest in the business side of the sport. By the time the plane landed, Cheyrou had offered her a chance to continue playing for PSG and supporting sponsorships and business development for the women's team.

"It was great to continue playing but it was really important that I got to keep working on the business of the sport," Criscione said. "I could never figure out why more clubs weren't taking advantage of the business interests of their players. Many of us are very interested in business and want to work on that while also playing."

Criscione does not just preach the "early start" approach to post-career planning; she started laying the groundwork for her career in business right alongside her playing career. Prior to joining PSG, she completed a master's degree with the Football Business Academy in Geneva, Switzerland.

Today, she has taken all her experience on and off the pitch and applied it to an entirely new challenge as director of women's football at N3XT Sports, a Barcelona-based global sports consulting firm that specializes in digital transformation and innovation.

Criscione said that when she talks with younger athletes, she always stresses the need to make good use of their time away from training and competition. Although elite sport is demanding, Criscione said she could always find time to devote to education and development.

"Every athlete has an expiration date," she said. "No matter who you are: Ronaldo, Messi, Steph Curry. It happens to all of us. I'll always be an athlete no matter what. But we all have to have more in our lives than that."



Employee Reskilling and Upskilling: Next Is Now

Jessica Conser, Ph.D. SVP, Products and Solutions, LHH

We just don't get it.

No matter how many times we're warned of the profound and impending shortage of skilled workers needed to fill the jobs of the future – and the warnings have been around for years – an alarming number of companies across the globe are putting off the implementation of proactive human capital strategies.

Some of the delay can be attributed to the pandemic. Normal business activities have largely been overtaken by crisis management. We've been so busy ensuring the survival of our organizations, we haven't had as much time as we might need to address future challenges.

However, the pandemic cannot be used as an excuse for all of the dithering and delaying. And there is a lot of that going on right now.

Recently, LHH conducted a [global survey](#) of 2,100 HR decision makers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France and Australia to gauge their commitment to future-proofing workforces. The results were disheartening, to say the least.

The survey found that only 56% of all organizations are actively working to future-proof their talent pipelines. However, within that figure, there is evidence that organizations are struggling with the key components of a future-looking HR strategy.

The survey also found that less than half (47.2%) of organizations are focusing their attention on the transferrable skills of existing employees to fill future job openings, a critical component for the redeployment of talent.

As well, the survey indicated that 40%

of hiring managers have not even considered reskilling or upskilling to fill job vacancies and only 33.5% are confident in their organization's ability to deliver reskilling and upskilling programs.

This lack of attention to future-proofing is being exacerbated by labor force trends, which show a huge surge in both job openings and people quitting their jobs to look for new career development opportunities.

The U.S. Department of Labor [recently reported](#) 9.3 million job openings in April, the highest number ever recorded in its survey. In the same month, nearly 4 million Americans quit their jobs, double the number from the same month one year ago.

Put these two metrics together, and you can see how the lack of fit-for-future skilled labor is creating a perfect storm.

It's like a game of musical chairs. Just about every company is running around the labor market, looking for new talent and hoping to retain the top talent they already have. However, if you're not offering reskilling and upskilling opportunities (among a broad range of career development solutions) then you will have trouble keeping your best people and almost no chance of attracting talent with future-proofed skills.

In short, without a forward-looking talent strategy, you run the risk of being among those without a seat at the talent table when the music stops.

Now is really the time to stop talking about future-proofing your workforce and start doing it.

But where to start?

“Future-proofing your workforce is so critically important that it cannot be left to that list of “next” things. It must be undertaken now to ensure your business is prepared to succeed in the years ahead.”



Like any great challenge, the path to a solution can only be found through a brutally honest self-evaluation. For employers, this means asking three very tough questions about your human capital.

1. How will your business change? One of the biggest reasons why business organizations put off major decisions about future-proofing their workforces is that they are not entirely sure what kind of skills they will need in the future. Although some organizations have done the foundational work to determine how macro forces will change their core business, many others are running blind into the future, not knowing how technology or other natural forces will transform how and what they do.

2. How well do you know your people? If you're like most business organizations, you have a limited understanding of what your people are actually doing and which ones have the capacity to learn and acquire the skills needed for future roles. It's essential to get a clearer picture of the people you already employ and identify those who can be supported through a transition into new roles with new skills.

3. What is the best way to cross the skills gap? If you're able to identify future talent needs and the people within your organization who can help you fill them, you still need a strategy to get them across the skills gap. There are many different strategies and tools that can help your people make the journey to fit-for-future skills, but it will require the support and guidance of a strategic human capital advisor to map out the path to that future state.

It will be profoundly difficult for some organizations to transition away from crisis management into a more strategic mindset given that many regions of the world are still facing great uncertainty from the pandemic.

However, future-proofing your workforce is so critically important that it cannot be left to that list of "next" things. It must be undertaken now to ensure your business is prepared to succeed in the years ahead.

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Life After Competitive Sports: Why It's Never Too Soon for Athletes to Start Planning

Mayi Cruz Blanco, Global Head of LHH Sports Solutions and Athlete Programmes

If past statistical trends continue, the gross majority of the estimated 11,091 athletes expected to gather in Tokyo for the Summer Olympic Games this summer will be experiencing their only shot at Olympic glory.

That's a harsh reality given the commitment needed to make it to what is still arguably the greatest sports competition in the world. But the numbers do not lie.

From 1896, when the Olympic Games were revived, until 2018, statistician Bill Mallon has [calculated](#) that of the 136,356 athletes known to have competed in either the summer or winter games, 72% (97,718) attended just a single Olympics. Of course, this dynamic [varies from sport to sport](#);

although competitors in sports like table tennis have a 50-50 chance of attending more than once, 80% to 90% of the athletes in boxing, soccer and gymnastics have only a single shot at Olympic glory.

The consequences of the "one-and-done" experience for most Olympic athletes can be severe, both financially and psychologically.

In many countries, qualifying for an Olympics can be directly connected to funding for training and living expenses. In other words, if you're not at least competing to get to the Olympics, you may not get much financial support. And that will cut deeply into the length of your career as an elite athlete.

["The Olympic movement has a moral responsibility to help athletes after their careers are over. And I think we're all working towards that goal."](#)

Chantal Buchser,
Senior Project Manager for Athlete
Support, IOC



So, what awaits these magnificent athletes in a post-Olympic world? Despite the knowledge that Olympic careers are perilously short, the global sports industry is still struggling to provide comprehensive transition support for athletes in all sports.

Very few athletes in either professional or top-level amateur sport earn enough money to set them up for the remainder of their post sporting lives. That requires sports organizations – governing bodies, national committees, leagues, and individual clubs – to look at formal transition support to help athletes find a career after sports.

“It’s fair to say that athletes like Usain Bolt and Michael Phelps are really an exception when it comes to Olympic competition,” said Chantal Buchser, the International Olympic Committee’s senior project manager for athlete support. “Careers can be short, and incomes related to this sport can be quite low. And it is not equivalent given the years of dedication and commitment our athletes have given to their sports. That’s why our program is so needed; to help athletes find professional opportunities after sports.”

The IOC has certainly been a pioneer in the area of post-competition transition support. For the past 16 years, the IOC [worked closely](#) with The Adecco Group, one of the world’s largest providers of career transition support, to help more than 50,000 athletes plan for a post-competition career.

Currently, the IOC offers Athlete365 Career+, a comprehensive transition program that includes support and resources to maximize education and employment opportunities to ensure that athletes have the best chances of a sustainable and rewarding career after sport.

Buchser said it’s very important to encourage athletes to focus some of their attention on post-competition planning while they are still active in their sports. Most elite athletes understand that their sports careers are vulnerable to disruption from things like injury, and need to spend at least some time preparing for a life after sports, she added.

The problem is that, as Buchser has found out first-hand, it can be very difficult to talk about future career plans with athletes while they are deep into training, or in the immediate aftermath of a big competition like the Olympics when they are likely suffering from severe psychological stress.

Research on athletes following big events, or those who are facing the end of their competitive careers, has shown that many face various degrees of psychological crisis.

[Some studies](#) have found that retiring from elite sports impacts the athletes’ “social and physical worlds, with changes in roles, relationships and daily routines.” Elite female gymnasts, for example, [described](#) the sensation of leaving competition as being “stuck between two worlds.”

This can also be a problem for professional athletes, whose competitive careers are often even shorter than top-level amateur athletes.

Current [data](#) shows the average career length in the Big Four professional leagues in North America ranges from just over five years for the National Hockey League and Major League Baseball, to just under five years for the National Basketball Association and only three years in the National Football League. The same holds true for the top levels of competitive soccer; in the English Premier League, for example, the [average career](#) is just eight years.

Short careers and often limited earning potential make post-competition career planning essential for all athletes, although finding the time to broach the subject can be challenging.

“I’ve been at Olympic games and tried to talk to athletes about what they are going to do with their lives afterwards,” Buchser said. “It’s not really the right time. Athletes may experience a post-games depression. They put in so much time and energy focused on this one event and when it’s over, there can be a real letdown. And this is why it is so important to get the message out to these people that they can do more with their lives in addition to being an athlete.”

Progress is being made at the country level, Buchser said. Olympic committees in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, Norway, Switzerland, and South Africa – among others – have stepped up to help their athletes prepare for life beyond sport while they are still in the heat of competition, Buchser said.

Still, Buscher said that many within the Olympic movement acknowledge that more needs to be done. Recently, IOC President Thomas Bach acknowledged that programs like Athlete365+ are essential in helping athletes acquire the training and job opportunities to achieve “lifelong excellence on and off the field of play.”

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